

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

WASHINGTON POST
4 September 1983

Moscow Accuses Reagan Of 'Anti-Soviet' Campaign

By Robert Gillette
Los Angeles Times

MOSCOW, Sept. 3—The Soviet Union published a fresh attack today on the U.S. response to the loss of a South Korean airliner over Soviet territory, saying the White House is using its own "provocation" to generate a worldwide frenzy of anti-Soviet feeling.

A statement by the official news agency Tass, the third in three days on the airliner incident, gave further indication that the Soviet Union has no intention of apologizing for the reported downing of the Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 last week over the strategic island of Sakhalin.

The statement, which stressed Soviet allegations that the plane was on a spy mission, contained the strongest implicit justification thus far for shooting the plane down, but, like previous Tass statements,

stopped short of admitting that Soviet fighters actually did so.

Instead, the statement demanded that the United States explain why the plane veered 300 miles off course in its flight from New York to Seoul and why U.S. authorities did not intercede to guide it back to a correct flight path.

Western diplomats said that by casting suspicion on the reasons for the airliner's deviation over Soviet territory and stressing what Tass called a "flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the Soviet Union," Moscow seemed to be trying to justify an act that it was still loath to admit.

Accusing President Reagan of "thoroughly hypocritical sorrow" over the loss of the plane, the new Tass statement asked rhetorically, "Does Mr. President believe that the very concept of national sovereignty no longer exists and one may intrude with impunity into the air space of independent states? Or is he viewing the whole world now as a 'zone of U.S. vital interests?'"

The statement was read on evening television news, as were the two that preceded it. Soviet viewers were told that the White House and the U.S. State Department were striving to mount a "rabid anti-Soviet campaign" to convince world public opinion that the Soviet Union is "allegedly guilty of loss of life."

All this, Tass said, is meant to cover up U.S. complicity in a provocative act—the plane's intrusion—and thereby "disrupt the normalization of the world situation."

"Washington is feverishly covering up traces of the provocation staged against the Soviet Union with the utilization of the South Korean plane, which was flown out of the United States and intruded into the Soviet Union's air space," Tass declared.

Tass and the other state-controlled news media have given no hint of the number of persons who died in the catastrophe—269. The news agency has expressed regret on behalf of "leading circles" for the loss of life but has not explained how the loss occurred. The Soviet Union has also not publicly acknowledged that the plane was a fully loaded commercial airliner, although today's statement edged closer to this point by disclosing to the Soviet public for the first time it was a Boeing 747 belonging to a South Korean company. Relatively few Russians are likely to know how large a Boeing 747 is.

Yesterday, a Tass statement admitted that warning shots were fired by a Soviet fighter pilot along the plane's flight path. But Moscow has so far avoided the key U.S. allegation that a Soviet interceptor, while in contact with the ground, hit the airliner with a missile.

The gingerly wording of all the official statements, combined with fierce rhetoric about foreign spying, violations of national sovereignty and anti-Soviet "hysteria" in the Reagan White House all appear aimed at convincing an intensely patriotic Soviet public that whatever happened in the skies over Sakhalin Island, Soviet authorities acted properly.

An astute television viewer or reader of Pravda could deduce that the incident was considerably more complicated than was first suggested Thursday by a brief, two-paragraph Tass report that an "unidentified plane" had been intercepted over Soviet far eastern territory and had been escorted back into international air space.

To bolster its credibility, today's Tass statement quoted extensively from selected western news reports that questioned Washington's account of the incident and voiced suspicion that the Korean airliner was gathering intelligence. Woven throughout this statement, as in yesterday's, was the implicit premise that suspicion alone of intelligence-gathering is ground for military action against any intruding airplane.

STAT